

Ashtead Independents NEWSLETTER



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Summer 2025

Our playground and parks

Your Ashtead Independent Councillors have been pressing the Council for many months to improve the children's playground in the Queen Elizabeth II Recreation Ground, especially in view of the injuries that have occurred to some children using worn-out play equipment.

We have been fighting for our share of the Community Infrastructure Levy Fund (CIL) for an extensive refurbishment of the playground, and we should know the outcome soon. Cllr Patricia Wiltshire adds: "We have also applied for a share of CIL for conservation work in the wooded areas of Ashtead Park, but it really needs a large input of resources to get it right. We can only hope."



Ashtead Independent Councillors with the Council's new parks manager and the MVDC cabinet member for recreation, at the children's playground earlier this year, explaining the urgent need for essential repairs and improvements.

Changes to local councils

In 2027, Surrey County Council and Mole Valley District Council will cease to exist. The Government has an agenda for "Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation", which for us in Surrey means that our County and District authorities will be replaced in 2027 with either two or three new "Unitary" Councils and a directly elected Regional Mayor.

Meanwhile MVDC has instigated a "Community Governance Review" to explore whether there is a need for new Parish Councils in areas like Ashtead and Leatherhead.

Read the full story on our website www.ashteadindependents.org

Ermyn Way scheme rammed through by LibDems

Liberal Democrat councillors have pushed through a controversial housing scheme for 270 homes and a traveller site on former Green Belt land at Ermyn Way — a development larger than the entire existing neighbourhood it borders.

At the Mole Valley Council Development Management Committee meeting on 2nd July, LibDem councillors ignored fierce objections from Ashtead Independent councillors and local residents, brushing aside concerns about loss of open space, gridlocked traffic, and overstretched public services.

No school places. No real transport. No answers.

Shockingly, the approved plan includes zero provision for additional school places. It also proposes a laughable "car club" with just two shared vehicles for over 500 new residents — despite the site being 1.7 miles from the nearest railway station and lacking evening bus services. The proposed development would contain more dwellings than the current homes accessed from Ermyn Way. One LibDem councillor appeared to suggest that new residents would be happy not to use cars — a comment that left many in the chamber stunned.

Residents ejected from Council Chamber

In a dramatic and unprecedented move, the LibDem committee chair ordered the public gallery cleared, ejecting around 50 Ashtead and Leatherhead residents from the chamber. The reason? Councillors allegedly felt "intimidated" by applause — not insults, not shouting, just clapping.

When Ashtead Independent Cllr Chris Hunt asked if any councillor had been unable to hear proceedings, not a single one said yes. Yet the chair refused to reconsider, even ejecting residents who had come for unrelated agenda items. "One resident who tried to speak to the chair was bluntly brushed aside; she didn't want to talk about it."

Ashtead Independents: "This is not democracy"

Cllr Gerry Sevenoaks condemned the decision: "This was a major development with huge local impact. Residents behaved respectfully. To eject them was a disgrace. We ask people to engage in local democracy, then punish them when they do.

"Given the scale of the Ermyn Way development, its impact on the local area and the extensive public consultation, it is not surprising that a large number of residents, approximately 50, attended the meeting in the public gallery. Council members and officers must have known that this would be a contentious item and should have prepared accordingly.

"For most of the residents attending, this was their first time at a Council meeting. They kept quiet during the speeches and not unnaturally clapped those who supported their views. Some leeway should have been given. After all, there was no booing, hissing, name calling, and there were no insults — just some clapping from the gallery. It was not a threatening environment and certainly not intimidating.

"We continually ask the public to get involved with local matters but, when they do, they are treated with contempt and dismissed from the Public Gallery by the LibDems. This is not how local democracy should work!"

BESS sparks opposition

A planning application for a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) on Green Belt land north of Barnett Wood Lane (in Lanes and Common ward) is due to be considered later this year by MVDC. There have been numerous letters of objections, including from Ashtead Independent councillors Andy Smith and Patricia Wiltshire, local residents and environmental groups, and from the President of Ashtead Independents, Professor David Hawksworth. The City of London Corporation, owners of the adjacent Ashtead Common National Nature Reserve, have also objected. Opponents of the scheme cite harm to the openness of the Green Belt, the negative visual impact on the landscape, the effect on wildlife and biodiversity, the problems of noise and light pollution, and the fire risks from battery storage systems.

Taken for a ride ?

We are waiting to hear from Surrey County Council Highways about the promised consultation on their proposed Cycle Corridor along Craddocks Avenue and Barnett Wood Lane, which is part of the Local Cycling and Walking Improvement Programme (LCWIP). Residents are understandably concerned and anxious about this scheme, for which there is little enthusiasm and no demand. Ashtead Independent councillors have been promised that the local community will be properly consulted and that the scheme will not go ahead on this route if there is widespread opposition to it.

Flushed with success

Your Ashtead Independent Councillors, in conjunction with Ashtead Traders, applied for MVDC funding to refurbish and redesign the public toilets in the Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall car park. The new facilities were opened in February. Everyone is delighted with the upgrade, making them safer and more secure for all users. Ashtead Independents – always working together with the community.

Improving our car parks

We are delighted that following representations to the Council by your Ashtead Independent councillors, the car park in Grove Road, off The Street, has now been resurfaced.

Ashtead Independent Alley Action

Can you spare two hours once a month on a Saturday to join other community-minded volunteers and help keep Ashtead's footway alleys and key pinch points usable for all?

Below are 'before' and 'after' photos of recent clearance at the foot of the Woodfield railway footbridge.



Please contact Cllr Chris Hunt if you would like to help.

Your Mole Valley Councillors Ashtead Lanes and Common Ward



Andy Smith



Patricia Wiltshire



Chris Hunt

Your Mole Valley Councillors Ashtead Park Ward



Mary Cooper



Gerry Sevenoaks



Garry Stansfield

Surrey County Councillor Chris Townsend



*Ashtead Independents website
www.ashteadindependents.org*

Monthly Drop-in Advice Surgery

Ashtead Independent councillors run a monthly surgery, 2-4 pm on the first Saturday of each month at Ashtead Library.

All residents are invited to drop-in and discuss local concerns, or email your councillor via the email addresses listed at www.ashteadindependents.org

Developers lose housing appeals

Two major housing schemes proposed for Ashtead have been rejected by planning inspectors.

Appeals by developers against Mole Valley Council's refusal to allow developments at the Marsden Nursery site in Ashtead Park ward and at Murreys Court in the Lanes and Common Ward have both been rejected following appeal hearings.

Ashtead Independent councillor Andy Smith said: "Local residents will be relieved at these two appeal decisions by the Planning Inspectorate." Full story on our website www.ashteadindependents.org